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## Reviewing In-(ter)ventions in a maturing field

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## **Reviewing In-(ter)ventions in a maturing field**

Book review of *Artistic Interventions in Organizations: Research, Theory and Practice* (Routledge Research in Creative and Cultural Industries Management) (2016) by Ulla Johansson Sköldberg, Jill Woodilla, Ariane Berthoin Antal, Ariane (Eds.) London/New York, NY: Routledge.

ISBN: 978-1138821132, around 140 USD.

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As indicated in the headline, the following re-view of a book on artistic intervention, is itself a kind of inter-vention and moves into an in(ter-)between. Accordingly, it enters into an inter-relationship with the authors, and contents, while venturing into its elaborations critically.

Speaking about re-View, the first impression the book offers is its relatively extraordinary cover. Compared to mostly neutral, boring covers, the one used here strikes by its form: colourful expression and somewhat irritating form and figures, framed in a magenta-pink ribbon and letters. Three human-like figures, oddly dressed, with wings, and an animal with claws, spiral, chaos, and order. But this artful expression remains on the covering outside, not continued by artefacts or photos of artistic intervention inside, probably also due to constraints by the publisher. But, wouldn't it be helpful and consequent, to use more illustrating, pictures and colourful expression of ideas in publications, especially on this topic?



**Figure 1: Artwork on the cover of the book (Source: Routledge)**

"The field is *maturing* ..." (p. 37)

The field addressed, is a meeting ground of art and artistic process and organisation, and the book invites to journey through this field in various ways and learning about its development and maturation.

Overall, this certainly mature and sophisticated as much as unusual book offers an exemplarily and esteemed overview of the *state-of-the-art* of the field of artistic intervention in relation to organisation and business in particular. As such, it provides a broad range of understandings and insights into where the field stands and what it offers, conceptually, methodologically and empirically. All of its authors display an admirable courage and tenacity and the book marks a significant advance in thinking and re-thinking about artistic intervention.

The publication is arranged in four parts with 15 chapters; including an embracing introduction and final reflections by the editors as well as a postlude. The first two parts frame the field and discuss questions of evidence and assessments (or the lack and problems with the same). Part three offers some cases and stories "Learning from success and failure", the fourth part continuous with different "Experiences with different art forms" (or media). "Responsibility for making it happen" is the unusual headline for fifth part, while the final part offers some reflections and the postlude

### **Part I: Framing the Field**

**1.** The headline for this part makes the reader wonder: Is this framing also a taming? The genealogical and reconstructive introduction is written by the three editors, speaking with one voice that is itself already an artful act of integrative expression. All are well-known pioneers and well-established researchers in this exquisite "niche" called "Artistic interventions in organizations". Programmatically, they define these "Artistic Interventions", as those people, practices or products from the world of art that are entering organizations to make a difference. What is revealing already here is that they do open up the possibility of carriers of artistic interventions beyond individuals. For the future of the field this decentring and opening towards the actual doing and emerging effects (*pro-ducere*) in addition or beyond individual artists seems promising. Hereby a bridge to the recent re-turn (forward) to practice in organisation and management studies could be built.

Art and (business) organisation as distinct, but not necessarily oppositional, invites cross-cultural learning and the value of the same may explain the increasing number of experiments mentioned. Examples in diverse kinds of organisations with many different art forms as well as outcomes, effects of interventions are offered. With its overview ranging from early examples, expansion of the field (its enabling agents) and various perspectives on development it not only shows the background in practice and different discourses, but also opens up for a future to come ...

**2.** In the subsequent chapter, one of the pioneers of the field, Lotte Darsø looks back. Being in the field for a longer time and a thorough and reflective field-worker herself she offers a revealing historical overview. How did "Arts-in-business from 2004-2014" unfold? The subtitle is telling: "From experiments in practice to research and leadership development". Taking a historical perspective, she outlines how Arts & Business has been and still is an emergent field, summarizes important, though selective initiatives. Moving through the field was influenced by spirits of revolutionary optimism and sobered pessimism; a move from high flying hopes of uplifting possibilities to low realities, down to the "bottom line".

Accordingly, she describes the negative impact of the financial crisis on, but also energising and motivational (intrinsic & strategic?) drivers of artistic interventions. In particular, the role of these interesting inter-beings called "intermediaries" (later discussed in detail in chapter 12) but also leaders and managers as gatekeepers are emphasised. For her, artful creations are transformative. Conceptually, and practically, she sees in generating "Constructive Disturbance" the value of artistic interventions, whereas both elements need to be in a dynamic balance to be effective. Importantly, she provides illustrating examples and puts emphasis on the role of body in artful learning. Originally, projected as revolutionary development, taken a sober, partly disillusioned hindsight look, states an evolutionary process. What might then be a "re-evolution" and what are the "Learning-Tales of Arts-in-Business" that will be told by 2024?

## Part II: Assessment and evidence

**3.** By entering the subsequent part on assessment and evidence we are continuing an evaluation of the "maturing" field. The third chapter by Ariane Berthoin Antal and Anke Strauß takes a multi-stakeholder perspective while searching for evidence of values-added in artistic intervention in organizations. This chapter with its meta-analysis of publications and empirical studies as well as current field research on effects of artistic intervention offers a very valuable contribution. Their analysis indicates that these effects are mainly found A) at personal and interpersonal levels, B) generated in inter-spaces (opening spaces of possibility) C) spilling-over from personal and interpersonal levels to organisational levels D) while the latter one depends on leadership support E) and some studies are also showing unintended positive impacts with external stakeholders.

In particular, it is the "inter-space" which provides the generative power for what is co-created in artistic interventions. This most fascinating concept of an in-between-space describes temporary and social spheres that are qualified as opening milieu of possibilities. Within the same truly "*part-icipants*" can experience new ways of sensing and seeing, practicing and reflecting. Thereby, the significance of the in-ter-between and inter-relation becomes evident: "Inter-Vention" requires and generates "Inter-Spaces" and vice versa.

In a way, also the book is a kind of dynamic "*inter-stand*", as a specific form of *in-(ter) between*: It is not only documenting relationships between studies and practices of art and organisation, but also what these might become. Being and becoming in the middle and in transition the textual and contextual interspace of the book offers the recipient its own value added or better to say, *sur-plus*: a manifestation of and introduction into the "state of the arts" of artistic intervention!

Systematically, different effects at personal, interpersonal and organisational levels as well as level-spanning impacts are distinguished, and then fleshed out. Interestingly, "Seeing More and Differently" was the most frequent mentioned effect (of participating in AI) mediating an awareness of present conditions, reflection and widening perspective. This insight offers a possible link to emerging approaches towards mindfulness. Personal growth, leadership and learning new skills or developing new tools are all part of personal development, while developing internal and external relationships, collaborative ways of working (communication) are part of effects on the important interpersonal level. The final level, concerning the overall organisation, include strategic and operational impacts as well as Organizational Development (organizational climate and culture). Furthermore, level-spanning effects are related to artful ways of working dealing with unexpected, being open, adopting artist format, trusting process - and "Activation".

An illustrating table or figure would have been very helpful to see the different effects related to various levels and their tensions or interdependencies respectively level spanning nexus at one glance or in a non-linear order!

One important message that is calling for *act(uat)ion*, is that of making space beyond the interspace for follow-up activities after interventions which are as vital as processual evaluations.

**4.** One way to respond to the question concerning the evaluation of artistic intervention can be found in the fourth chapter by Giovanni Schiuma and Daniela Carlucci on "Assessing the business impact of Arts-Based Initiatives". In this chapter opportunities of challenges of art-based initiatives (ABIs) are outlined also in relation to organizational value creation. The language of "exploitation of arts" and using ABI as "instruments" to be "integrated" in the operation and strategy of an organisation and for "humanization" and generating business benefits, especially "desired business performance results" (60-61) utilises and appropriates art ... purposefully. For assessing the various impacts of art and ABIs on people change and on infrastructure development, either metric index- or quantifying indicator based approaches or narrative-based approaches are differentiated. The assessment via (Schiuma's) visualising "Arts Value Map" as platform and guiding framework serves as an example of narrative approach to measurement, and phase-specific mapping links between ABIs and business performance. Using analytic hierarchy process method to make the arts value map operative imposes an order ("harmonising") in sense of the business and performative logic. Rather uncritically, (cognitive) maps and mapping are seen as functioning as (mental) representation and "thinking tool".

**5.** The first of a series of cases describes how "Newspaper Changes its identity through an artistic intervention" written by Marcus Jahnke. This is an impressive story of how to use hermeneutics for a deeper understanding and sense-making of artistic practice and an artistic intervention process. With the author, the reader moves through the different and fascinating phases of a Danish initiative in the context of a pan-Nordic project, confirming how vibrant artistic initiatives are in Scandinavia.

**6.** The next chapter tells two striking stories about failed attempts to commodify creativity by Elene Raviola and Claudia Schnugg. Both cases that are presented are artists-in-residence projects situated in different companies and countries. The authors describe how the interventions – one using the captivating neologism "*Creactivity*" – were conceived and practiced as well as which "outcomes" were generated. Following (Post-)Marxist logic of exchange and use value, they reveal how packaging the idea of organisational creativity is or can be and that making it into an exchangeable, commodified good is limited and limiting as it loses its use values. Furthermore, the stories show that intermediaries (like experts) play a decisive role in the attempts of commodification, selling and translation, while creativity withdraws such appropriations, leaking out of designed packages in unforeseeable ways showing qualities of the extra-ordinary.

**7.** "Artistic intervention as detournement and constructed situation" is the title and programmatic topic of the subsequent chapter written by Alexander Styhre and Jona Fröberg. Implicitly linked back to the aforementioned inter-space, the authors demonstrate powerfully the significance of entrepreneurial liminal spaces, especially related to artist-in-residence-programs. Philosophically and conceptually they refer to and discuss the "Situationist International Movement". Following the quest(ion) what a transfer and transposition of Situationist terms and tools (detournement, constructed situation) mean for today's late-modern society is illustrated by the case of a multinational manufacturing company in the automotive industry. In a way, the chapter and the book and its contents are – as it were –

also a kind of detournement including diversion deflection, turning aside, over-turning and re-situating messages. Indeed, perhaps we need more “de-tour(ing)” (Küpers, 2015). The empirical project describes how situations were constructed actively by using art and culture as resources for de-familiarising every-day life. In convincing ways they show how a writing project and the co-presence of artists, created a situated, shared space, where proposals may be accepted, negotiated or rejected. Importantly, reflecting upon emerging resistance, constructed situations can be perceived as problematic and stressful because they undermine taken-for-granted beliefs and worldviews. Discussing Leonard-Barton’s most fascinating concept of “Creative abrasion” *in sensu*, a minimum level of tensions between different domains of expertise is discussed.

This reminded me of the popular advocacy of creative abrasion at Apple Macintosh where a team of people who were intentionally diverse in their personalities like poets, historians, musicians who were also engineers was completely separated them from the rest of the business. In doing a team was formed with conflicting cognitive (and other) biases, opposing viewpoints who have had to practice decision making and problem solving processes thus forcing them to create new inter-sections.

Are successful artistic intervention projects always based on the capacity for mutually creative abrasion? Is (peer) collaboration the opposite of Abrasion or can they co-exist and integrated? According to the authors here, Artistic Interventions allow exploring and exploiting the artistic know-how of the participating artist in order to open up for new collaborative relations, especially when processed through shared liminal spaces.

#### **Part IV: Experiences with different art forms**

**8.** The subsequent part IV offers reflective accounts about “Experiences with different art forms” Describing the move “From aspiration to evidence”. Linda Ippolito and Nancy Adler discuss the nexus of “Music, leadership and organizational transformation” and the generative power of musical intervention. Calling for a poetic activism (*in sensu* Gergen), they invite to go beyond what they call “dehydrated approaches of economics, politics and war”. By using various thickly described vignette cases they show how music in different countries can make a difference and heal society in impressive ways. The way that music (-based interventions) transform mind-sets is more than aspirational. For the authors it is and can be shown as evidence of being efficacious. Furthermore, initial research is presented related to the use of music and the metaphor of ensemble music-making in resolving disputes and negotiations, demonstrating that music-group outlearns and outperforms non-music groups. Reconstructing how different kind of learnings developed (and was transferred) during the series of musical experiences and negotiations, support deeper understanding of complexities and the development of emotional and social intelligence, as well as activating creating potentials.

Hopefully, the claim of evidence and the dynamics of music and ensemble music-making are robust enough to transform organisational and societal dysfunctions. Focusing mainly on music the reader wonders: what about other and different media; what about for instance about visual arts, like painting photography and film? How do different media reinforce or weaken each other, effectively?

**9.** Another promising medium is presented in the next chapter on dance-based interventions. Being a choreographer that is a highly reflective practitioner, the author Bozic Yams demonstrates impressively the role of contemporary dance and choreographic models and tools for generating innovation.

Both can provide frames and structures to guide creative processes as well as increase awareness and knowledge about using the body, movement, time and composition in or for innovative process. In this elaboration, we are learning to understand how the dancer's body serves as a relational medium. It does so by tuning-in with space/exploring with body/reflection with time and sharing composition, all as highly relevant for creative organising. Notably, the author is also addressing limitations and challenges for working with dance-based interventions. Warning that being over- and under-demanding, over-complicated or being too simplified have no (transformative) effects, she pleads for finding or creating the right balance.

**10.** Theatre and acting represent further media discussed by Victoria Brattström, who takes a theatre director's perspective on intervening, as "Playing the 'magic if' ". A scripted scene helps to resonate with the idea of "Interpreting by playing". We are following steps that move from 1 Framing reality as theatre; 2 Analysing by re-enacting; 3 Reformulating circumstances at play and 4 Re-playing the game. The described enactments and interpretation process are examples of a hermeneutics *of* and *in* action that is treating the theatrical rehearsal-process as a way to understand the world (in a Rynellian sense). Furthermore, this hermeneutics offers implications for different audiences, including self-reflections. The chapter invites for a thinking about a critical Post-Ricoeurian critical hermeneutics of action.

## **Part V: Responsibility for making it happen**

**11.** The next part V is entitled and calling programmatically, ethically or normatively for a responsibility for making "it" happen. The role of "Managers in artistic intervention and their leadership approach" is the topic of the following chapter by Katarinia Zambrell. Here Airis projects (produced by TILLT) are presented, in which artists are employed part time to work with management and employees as artists in residence. In particular experiences, objectives and motivation of the Airis managers are reported and discussed for then demonstrating the exemplification and value of an aesthetic-inspired leadership approach related to discourse. Interestingly, this approach considers besides creating context and establishing a creative climate, also strengthening relations and linking employees as well as triggering activities. Reflectively, some critical aspects are addressed - including limited tangible results \_and following a post-romantic view a continuing with artistic interventions is called for.

**12.** Chapter twelve calls to "Mind the Gap: Bridging strategies for artistic interventions in organizations" by Ulla Johnsson Sköldberg and Jill Woodilla. Here two of the editors of the book discuss the decisive role of co-creative inter-mediaries and inter-mediary organizations as bridging actors or perhaps better called "agencies". Bridging is concretised as process-managing, trust-building and generating surplus value generating, can be linked to the concept of inter-bridging (Küpers et al. 2015). Responding to the intriguing question about how differences in the intermediary process affect outcomes of interventions, based on a literature overview they present three cases of Swedish intermediary organisations. Using quite helpful criteria, they compare these organisations demonstrating how different patterns are. In particular they are different with regard to purposes and fragile structures, artist and intermediary involvement, project realisation and (so called) "outcome", but also have similarities.

Their suggestions to consider the extent of artistic perspectives as well whose values are emphasised in the process, the status of outcomes is revealed as very meaningful. Taking the role of a serving and protecting curator and his or her unique curating, and also its specific requirements for the intermediary process, may be related to a kind of "servant leadership".

Focusing mainly on pragmatic aspects and transactional modalities of intermediaries, the authors do less address the capacities and challenges on how these can keep a critical edge or sting in their operation, and reconstructing imaginaries (O'Connor, 2014) while negotiating multiple interests, logics and norms.

**13.** The final chapter for this part discusses "Organizational Studios: enabling innovation" by two of the pioneering experts of the same: Stefan Meisiek and Daved Barry. They outline these studios as places for artistic inquiry related to research and work. For this they present the case of a Danish public organisation and the development of the studio project related to inter-departmental problems and knowledge sharing. The placement of the studio in the same house, but in a different part of the same ("close, yet different") may stand figuratively to what is needed in the sense of "living within" a given space. Some of the aspects of the facilitation processes were coercive, which makes the reader wonder about the role of authority and imposed rules or regimes in artistic intervention. Based on their experiences and the analysis of artistic materials and practices as well as outcomes, they conclude by offering specific recommendations (foreignness and legitimation, proximal location, yet separation of artistic studios, need for guiding facilitators and rules and peer collaboration, beginners' level of artistic process as well as reflective conversations). Like in their research before (Barry and Meisiek 2010), it is the work (and effects?) that art *does*, - here also in studio-mediated interventions - that helps to *seeing more and differently*.

## **Part VI: Reflection**

**14.** The closing part IV offers concluding reflection. In the final chapters the editors' of the book invite to move "From Revolution to evolution ... and back again?" They are describing their editing as a learning adventure and expressing a concern about the absence of a critical discourse as well as outline some challenges for the field ahead. Powerfully, they are calling for boldness, among academics, artists, managers, intermediaries and policymakers to take up bolder steps and thereby the revolutionary spirit in the development of research, theory and practice of artistic intervention in organisations. In complementation of the demanded "qualitative extension" and "full free expansion", or "expanding practice" perhaps also a furthering intensification might be significant. Implicitly, the political dimensions of artistic intervention became detectable and were addressed in the final chapter. This is important as artistic creativity is often about informality or questioning given forms, radical differentiation beyond creative tensions as well as entering liminality, moving in transgression, etc. thus conflicts and contradictions. It seems important to explore these conflictual dynamics more especially without re-solving them. In turn, the question remains what need to happen if arts and business/economy are to more fully actuate the potential of their inter-relationship "this side" of banality and cynicism!

Overall, what was very much missed were some more explicit connections between art, artistic intervention and pressing ethical and political issues, in particular sustainability (Kagan, 2008; 2011; Shrivastava et al., 2012). For example, "art-based mediation" has been shown to be meaningfully connected to initialize a multidimensional, sustainable, development process in health care systems (Schulz et al., 2016). Through art-based projects, aesthetics can rise to become a field of enactment and investigation on how creativity and sustainability inter-connect.

Phenomenologically, practices and effects of art-based or aesthetic mediation can be revelatory also about socially and culturally unsustainable realities, thus offering critically dissent and/or a "poetics of reconciliation" (Cohen, 1997) as well as fostering coherent sustainability drivers and messages within and around organization and transformative possibilities.



The book closes with a postlude by Barbara Czarniawska who, historically informed, is musing on connections between the unpredictable arts and management (anti-/business-case), and offering a “Dilbertian” story poking fun. She is finalising with a reference to Serres interpreting art as parasite on the hosting corporate body (causing interference or interruption) thereby becoming catalyst for complexity.

A critical reader wonders: are parasitism and an abusive parasitic relation a proper image and metaphor for art and business/organisation and management? In a parasitic relationship production gets exploited by a maintained order of interloping consumption, organized by one-way relations that are not reversed (Serres 1982/2007: 5). What would it mean that art as “the parasite takes all and gives nothing” while management/organisation as “the host gives all and takes nothing” (38); leading towards further passages elsewhere beyond economic exchanges via marketed transactions? How can art and management/organisation “become symbionts” (Serres, 1982/2007: 183; 2012 89); hybrid minglings in a materio-socio-ethico-political ecology & culture? How do parasites (and hosts) mutate into symbionts, both taking and giving back in a symbiotic reciprocity, how can they move in the middle of their ways, amidsthips. How to keep Hermes-ian passages, crossings, interceptions, impostures, purloinings and ruses alive; while processing a general, proto-ethical parasitism (Burton & Tam 2016). One way is not to focus on fixed positions or opposition, but on dynamic pre-positions, like along, between, amid, around, while, during, through, out into and, of course, throughout as well towards ec-statically (Serres 2003, 307-21), and movingly dwelling “in possibility”, in a revived Dickinsonian sense (Dickinson 1970, 327).

Perhaps it would make sense to consider and conceive the differentiations between art/aesthetics and business/organization/management as relations of creative and proto-dramatic suspenseful tensions and mutual interpenetration or irritation, rather than as divisions or parasitic. This would open the possibility for complex re-configurations and transpositions and -formations. But for venturing into these and re-inventing the *inter-* of artistic *inter-ventions* it seems important to pursue further research on practices and praxis, and situating them into today’s impactful neo-liberalising world.

Overall, the book provides penetrating and thought-provoking insights into the fascinating worlds of artistic interventions, exemplified conceptually and empirically. Allowing different moves through the fields of art(istic) practices and business, the book offers a source of understanding and inspiration as well as encouragement for further experiments.

Those few quibbles and suggestions mentioned before might be considered for a very much hoped next book edition, or even book series as the issues and possibilities discussed and opened up for will only become more important.

All in all, the editors and authors do an admirable job highlighting the role and demonstrating the significance of artistic and aesthetic praxis by offering compelling readings that are in many ways very intriguing and insightful. Indeed, this valuable collection of ideas and findings is manifesting in itself a singular, bold, and exciting work of textual and con-textual art-work or artful and inspirational source itself. Although, as indicated before, some more pictures (or hyperlinks to exhibiting cyberspaces) of the discussed art-works and artful events would have been enriching. It is hoped that in future books on artistic interventions this will be integrated in order to create and offer more multi-faceted and sensually richer *artif-acts*.

All who are actually or potentially interested in conditions, processes, values and effects of artistic interventions will find this book not only informative and inviting, but in also challenging, thus sensibly rewarding. For those interested parties this book provides a very

engaging travelogue through emerging landscapes of unfolding 'inter-worlds', where art and aesthetics and organisations co-create different ways of organizing and be(com)ing.

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